Dear Survey Respondent,

Thank you for your interest in water management in the Clark Fork and Kootenai River Basins. The members of the Clark Fork Task Force are grateful for your willingness to devote your time and energy to providing input as part of the Montana water planning process.

As directed by the Montana Legislature, the Water Resources Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is launching an initiative to update the Montana State Water Plan. The initiative is called the 2015 Montana Water Supply Initiative (MWSI). The MWSI engages citizens in a planning process to develop strategies and recommendations for meeting Montana's future water needs. Planning activities are taking place in the Clark Fork, Yellowstone, Upper Missouri and Lower Missouri River basins. Recommendations that result from the planning activities will be presented to the 2015 Legislature.

The Clark Fork Task Force (CFTF) represents geographic diversity and diversity of water resource issues within the Clark Fork and Kootenai River Basins. The CFTF is an advisory council to the DNRC, and the council is comprised of a broad range of citizen interests. In 2004 the Task Force developed a water management plan (available at http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water_mgmt/clarkforkbasin_taskforce/water_mgmt_plan. asp), and now they are working to revise and update the plan. However, we need the input of citizens from across the basins in order to develop the most sustainable, effective recommendations.

The first phase of the Montana Water Supply Initiative involves working with the public to understand the most compelling water management issues. For the next several months, the Clark Fork Task Force will be diligently working to provide a forum for broad citizen engagement in the state water planning process, and assist the DNRC in identifying water resources issues and identifying data gaps.

Throughout the month of October, we will hold public meetings to scope the most important issues around the Basins to accomplish the first goal of broad citizen engagement in the water planning process. Our ultimate objective is to actively engage citizens in developing an adaptive State Water Plan that identifies options to meet future needs, satisfies existing consumptive and non-consumptive uses, and protects Montana's water resources.

We also developed this survey as an additional way to hear your input. We want to know what water management issues you prioritize, and why.

Your input is valuable to all of us involved in this planning process. All of the prioritized issues collected during the public meetings in the Clark Fork and Kootenai Rivers Basins and completed surveys will be synthesized into a "public issues scoping report" that will be available online or from the DNRC in early 2014.

The next step will be to use the issues and information gaps that you identified to inform the development of recommendations and water management strategies for the Clark Fork River Basin and Kootenai River Basin.

Thank you again for your input.

Sincerely,

The Clark Fork Task Force

Additional Resources

If you have questions about the water planning process, please contact Michael Downey at MDowney2@MT.gov.

If you would like to know more about the public engagement process, please contact Emily Schembra at emily@cnrep.org.

More information about the MWSI can be found at: http://www.dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water_mgmt/state_water_plan/.

For local news coverage of this process, check out the following articles:

http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/meetings-on-state-water-plan-start-monday/article_24137754-d2b7-5ab3-872e-30518949d51c.html

http://www.greatfallstribune.com/article/20130928/NEWS01/309280006/Water-plan-guide-state-20-years-Meetings-get-public-comment-begin-Monday

http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/meetings-on-montana-s-water-plan-start-monday/article_e23f1508-294e-11e3-9f47-0019bb2963f4.html

http://www.greatfallstribune.com/article/20130930/NEWS01/309300011/Residents-say-more-water-storage-needed?nclick_check=1